

1ST COMMANDMENT

What Is Not Written Down Does Not Exist. What Is Not in Your Calendar Does Not Get Done. What Is Not Measured Does Not Improve

For weeks, I had known the big annual plan presentation was approaching. It was my opportunity to finally put into words the change I had been talking about for months. The plan was in my head—I had gone over it dozens of times—but I had never committed it to paper. Then, four days before the pivotal moment, I received a short email from our managing director’s assistant: “Reminder: pre-read to be sent tomorrow morning.” My stomach dropped. Tomorrow? I had nothing. No story, no structure, no data. Just a handful of scattered thoughts in my head. Questions flooded my mind within seconds: How much time will I need? Can I salvage anything from previous presentations? Where do I even begin? That night, I sat in front of my laptop, with a half-finished presentation and countless Excel files open. It felt like trying to assemble a puzzle with half the pieces missing. At

9:30 p.m., I realized I lacked critical data. Panic set in. Sweat ran down my back, and adrenaline clouded my thinking. And yet, I knew that by the next morning, I would find a narrative. It was my talent: I trusted my intuition. I could always find something to say in meetings, even without preparation. I could improvise a decent presentation, even if I had to build it the night before. It often worked. Clients nodded. Colleagues breathed a sigh of relief. And I told myself, “Perfect. I’ve pulled it off again.” But deep down, I knew something was not right.

Every time I improvised, I was not giving my best. I delivered enough—but never my best. My message lost strength, my story lacked clarity. Others might not have noticed, but I did: my impact was less than it could have been. I delivered a solid presentation... when it could have been memorable.

And it did not just affect me—my team suffered as well. Because I did not plan properly, I passed the pressure on to them: last-minute requests, late-night emails, and messages like, “Can you have it ready for tomorrow?” It was not a lack of commitment or bad intentions, but a direct consequence of the way I worked.

In the end, we delivered—but we missed opportunities: to prepare more thoroughly, to think as a team, to build the best possible proposal together. And the extra effort I asked of them was often offset by other areas where the work fell short of the quality it deserved. I had neither the energy nor the moral authority to demand more from them.

For a long time, I told myself this was simply “working

under pressure.” That it was part of the game. But the truth was different: I was chasing myself... and dragging my team along with me.

What Is Not Written Down Does Not Exist

Perhaps this sounds familiar to you too. With experience and intuition, you can get through many meetings. With a last-minute effort, you manage to pull together a presentation. And, if we are honest, most of the time it works—or at least it half works.

But the price is high. If you do not write things down—if you do not organize and structure your thinking—you lose control. You fail to reach your full potential, you miss opportunities to truly persuade, and you lose sight of what is essential versus what is merely incidental.

Metacognition—thinking about how we think and learning about how we learn—is a key step in managing our time effectively. And the first step is surprisingly simple: write. On paper or digitally. Writing organizes your ideas, sharpens your conclusions, and captures thoughts that would otherwise disappear.

By writing, you make your progress visible, clarify your decisions, and create a roadmap for action. Relying solely on memory is risky—and in complex roles, it is a recipe for failure. Our brain is not an organized database: it blends ideas, priorities, and tasks together, and we quickly lose sight of the bigger picture.

This is where visual tools become essential allies. Lists, outlines, diagrams—they provide structure, reduce mental load, and create space for clear thinking. They help you see connections, understand complexity, and prioritize with logic.

The combination of reflective writing and visual tools is powerful: it increases your productivity, enhances your self-awareness, and leads to better decisions. Because what is not written down, in practice, does not exist.

In positions of high responsibility, managing time does not mean finding more hours—that is impossible—but allocating the hours you do have to your true priorities, and in the right proportions. And that begins by writing them down.

What Is Not Scheduled Does Not Get Done

Tom Peters once said, “Your calendar never lies.” And it is true—your calendar reveals your real priorities. To that, we add: “What is not scheduled does not get done.”

However, many people allow others to fill their calendars: automatic Outlook invitations, double or triple bookings, impromptu meetings. It may seem harmless, but in reality, their weeks become governed by other people’s priorities—while their own are left with no space. Technology makes it easier than ever to coordinate schedules, but it has also become a trap: allowing others to organize your time instead of doing it yourself.

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It should be the other way around: first, you define your priorities, and then you schedule accordingly. Anything that comes in afterward can be evaluated in that context. Everything that does not contribute to your goals is noise and distraction. A disorganized calendar does not bring clarity—it creates stress. A well-managed calendar is not just a planning tool; it is a reflection of your values, both professional and personal.

Schedule with intention. Set aside time for what truly matters—and protect it. Learn to say no as often as you say yes. And remember this is not just about work. Your family, your health, your friendships, and your passions also deserve a place in your calendar. Every yes to the outside world is a no to yourself.

This discipline requires effort, but it provides strategic clarity. You always know where your time is going—and whether it is aligned with what you truly value.

What Is Not Measured Does Not Improve

To measure is to see. To record. To evaluate. Without measurement, you do not know whether you are moving closer to your goals or progressing at the pace required.

In the early stages of improving your effectiveness, developing the habit of measuring progress on your priorities is essential. Not only to monitor those priorities, but also to assess results and define your next steps. Measuring forces

you to answer simple but critical questions: Am I investing my time in what matters most? Am I moving closer to my goals?

Measuring is not a technical exercise—it is an act of self-awareness. It clarifies your intentions, gives you control over the process, and shows whether your energy is translating into tangible results.

Sometimes we avoid setting measurable goals out of fear of not achieving them. We protect ourselves from potential failure by avoiding numbers or clear indicators. But measurement is not about judging yourself—it is about learning. If you invested time and still did not achieve the desired result, the question is not “Where did I fail?” but “What can I adjust?” Perhaps the goal was not well defined, perhaps you lacked sufficient visibility, or perhaps it was simply not a true priority. That is the purpose of measurement: to understand, not to punish yourself.

Those who measure grow. They not only know where they stand, but also where they can improve. Measurement makes progress tangible, which fuels motivation to keep going. Without it, intentions fade, and you end up trapped in the inertia of daily life.

It all starts with writing. What is not written down does not exist. What is not in your calendar does not happen. And what is not measured does not move forward. These habits may seem simple, but they provide the structure needed to balance the best of both cultures, as both personal and professional life depend on intentional planning.

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Without a method, there is no mental space, no energy, no balance—and certainly no way to sustain it over time.

This first commandment is the foundation of radical self-organization. It may sound simple, but it is one of the most powerful principles a leader can apply.

Questions for Reflection

Every leader believes they have clarity... until they write things down. Writing reveals gaps, forgotten priorities, and decisions that were never fully made. Your calendar shows whether you are acting with intention... or in survival mode. And measurement confronts you—with no excuses—with your real progress. This commandment is about that: moving from intuition to method. About stopping reliance on memory and building a system that sustains your best self.

Now pause for a moment and ask yourself:

- In which areas of your work are you relying too much on “keeping it in your head” instead of putting things down clearly in writing?
- If someone reviewed your calendar over the past four weeks, would they say it reflects your true priorities—or someone else’s?
- What specific indicator could you begin measuring this month to know whether you are truly making progress on what matters most?